whole Earth newsletter

United Church Board for World Ministries Summer 1998, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1

Eighteen appointed at April meeting

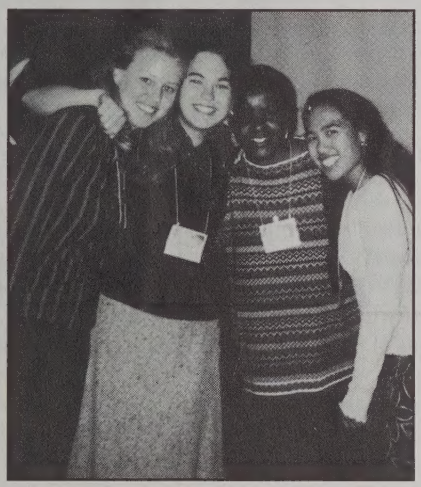
Eighteen persons, including four new missionaries, were appointed for service at the April meeting of the Common Global Ministries Board held in Indianapolis. They will be serving in 11 different countries, three in medical/mental health-related fields. (See separate story on returning missionary Phyllis Byrd, page 10.)

The four new missionaries are Bridget Robinson, South Africa; Jamie Rutherford, Honduras; Jeni Pia, the Philippines; and Helen Grant, Jerusalem.

Bridget Robinson will serve as an educational consultant for issues related to street children at the Cape Town Mission in Cape Town, South Africa, for three years beginning July 1. She holds degrees in both medical technology and business/music, and said she dropped out of medical school after two years with a 4.0 grade point average because she didn't like traditional medicine and would eventually like to study natural medicine. She is experienced as an eye care technician and in physical fitness.

Bridget has traveled in Central America and is fulfilling a lifelong dream of becoming a missionary. She is a member of St. Andrew Christian Church in Olathe, KS.

Jamie Rutherford will serve two years as a Global Mission Intern with the Association of Evangelical Institutions of Honduras (AIEH) as a program assistant for AIEH health clinics. She will work with Global Ministries' missionary Dr. Joyce Baker, and will be involved particularly with receiving and coordinating the work of North American volunteer groups participating in health-related projects. Her work began June 1.



NEWLY APPOINTED missionaries (l-r) Jamie Rutherford, Honduras; Helen Grant, Jerusalem; Bridget Robinson, South Africa; and Jeni Pia, the Philippines, huddle for the camera.

Jamie first traveled to Honduras five years ago and later spent four months with Dr. Baker. "It was probably the most incredible experience I have ever had, witnessing her compassion and devotion and getting to know some of the other missionaries there," Jamie said. Her church, First Congregational Church, UCC, Old Greenwich, CT, has a relationship with Dr. Baker. Jamie has an interest in medicine and, with a degree in biology, said she would like to get another degree in medicine and then work abroad eventually.

Jeni Pia will be involved in social service ministries as a Global Mission

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Boards talk community in April

Nurturing human community, one of the three strategic directions approved by the Common Global Ministries Board last year, was the theme of the April meeting of the CGMB.

In her Biblical reflection Dr. Mary Mikhael, international partner from the Middle East and president of the Near East School of Theology, challenged directors with a quote from the late Henri Nouwen when she said community is "a quality of heart. Nouwen said 'Take some risks with your hearts.' This made me think that all the great advancement in communication. . .all our scientific discoveries. . .can produce much wealth, but can never make qualities of heart."

She called the church "a community of unusual elements," but added, "The normal for us is a natural classification (Arabs, Jews, Samaritans, blacks, whites, in between) each a separate community that can live in harmony. Well, this is not. . .what God has planned or intended community to be. The mystery of God is a koinonia. . .the spirit of God in every relationship within the community." Mikhael referred to Ephesians 4:3 as "an appeal/plea for unity founded on the unity of God, with all the means, gifts, to achieve it."

Meeting just before the CGMB, UCBWM Directors welcomed new board members Persida Mendez and Frances Bryant, and approved a recommendation that directors serving in the Class of 1998 be re-nominated in total as the Class of 2002. In addition, a recommendation that current UCBWM Directors also serve as directors of the new Wider Church Ministries of the UCC, based on their willingness to serve, was also approved. Both actions were taken in response to a need for

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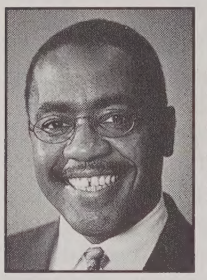
Message From The Staff



RECED ministry: Serving "my people"

By Lawrence A. Burnley
RECED Executive

The mission of the Racial/Ethnic Constituency Education and Development (RECED) Office is to develop and implement a dialogical educational model to facilitate critical awareness and increased participation by persons of color in Global Ministries. By "persons of color" we are referring to African, Native, Hispanic, Latino/a, Pacific Islander or Asian Americans.

I have the opportunity to work closely with each of the racial/ethnic caucuses within the DOC and UCC. Me, who unapologetically and proudly makes the claim to be Africentric. I don't hesitate to use phrases such as "my people," "my church", "my etc." I find it easy to draw lines along gender, class, sexual orientation and all the other lines we draw to separate ourselves. My experience has taught me well who "my people" are, and how to categorize God's creation. My experience in RECED, however, is causing me to reexamine the question, "Who are my people?" I am reminded of the rhetorical question of Jesus about his mother and brother in Matthew 12.

The aforementioned groups and subgroups within them are unique unto themselves. Each reflects remnants of the traditions of their ancestors — stories of both jubilation and suffering in a world that pushes them to the margins of society because of skin color or the spirit of their being. I am blessed by experiencing multiple cultures both within and beyond our communions. The diversity of the Body of Christ is expressed in so many ways — praise and preaching, food, expression of feelings, and the way we treat guests, to name a few.

"...not always shaped by experience but often by what we are told..."

God is allowing me to get an up-close view of the rainbow called humanity, and the beauty is something to behold. Unfortunately, however, what we see in "the other" is not always shaped by experience but often by what we are told by a third party. We are told that "the other" is someone who threatens "my people." Fear and insecurity are the primary forces which dictate our interaction when we engage "the other." Our feelings are shaped and informed by virtually every form of mass media, by personal experiences, and by educational experiences when we are bombarded with negative stereotypes and distorted interpretations of "the other's" history. Within this framework some groups are romanticized to promote the illusion of superiority and self-aggrandizement, while others are demonized to promote self-hate.

A member of the Council of American Indian Ministries of the UCC taught me a Lakota term, *mitakuyeoyasin*, which literally means "we are one" or "we are the same." Many constituent RECED groups embrace a belief in the unity of God's creation, all creation — plant, animal, humankind and all the elements in a unified whole. The whole is recognized as diverse (many parts) yet unified (one body). This does not deny the circumstances or integrity of any group's particularity. The challenge is not to choose between the particular and the universal but to embrace both. Not either/or. Both/and.

So who *are* my people? Perhaps I was given the answer as I was preparing to preach at the First Filipino UCC in San Bruno, California. As I sat there looking out over a beautiful sea of Filipino American faces, a voice within — a voice as real as anything I've ever heard — said to me, "Behold, your people."

Partners — news & views

Japan: The first female moderator of the Korean Christian Church in Japan was elected in October. Kyong He Joon is believed to be the first woman moderator of any church in either Korea or Japan. The KCCJ assembly also called for election of at least one female delegate from each of its five presbyteries as well as three from the women's association.

Japan: Takazato Suzuyo, a lay member of the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ in Japan, has been awarded the Doi Takako Human Rights Award. Takazato is a long-time leader in the campaign to end violence toward women near U.S. military bases on Okinawa, and a tireless advocate of the removal of American bases from the island.

The Philippines: Prior to presidential elections in the Philippines in May, Filipino church leaders commemorated the 12th anniversary of the "People Power Revolution" that toppled the Marcos regime by both calling for fair and open elections and stating that very little has changed. Bishop Roman Tiples Jr., general secretary, NCC in the Philippines, said, "Elections are not the be all and end all. We must discuss the basic issues and work for the preservation of life, the environment, the expansion of ecumenical life." Bishop Hilario Gomez, general secretary of Global Ministries partner the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, urged Christians to judge candidates by their position on important social issues such as peace, violence and environmental protection.

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Around the Region: Latin America and the Caribbean

Chiapas: Reflections on a massacre

By Dale L. Bishop, Acting General Secretary, Mission Program

Acting General Secretary Dale Bishop was among the delegation of North Americans who journeyed to Mexico City in April to present a Global Ministries Award of Affirmation to Bishop Samuel Ruiz for his courageous stand on indigenous rights, and also to be with the people of Acteal, in the Mexican state of Chiapas where, on Dec. 22, 1997, 45 Mayan Indians were massacred while at prayer. The visit was important since the indigenous people of Chiapas depend heavily on international presence in the area and international coverage to keep the Mexican government "honest" and paramilitary groups in line. Bishop has now witnessed the aftermaths of three massacres — of Palestinians in refugee camps in 1982, and of Lebanese in Qana in 1996. In his "Reflections on a massacre," he speaks of attending the fourth-month commemorative mass at Acteal, and how it was different from his other massacre experiences.

Despite the presence of the foreigners, this was a mass for the people. It had been organized by "the Bees," a group of mostly Catholic faithful who are supportive of the Zapatista goals of justice for marginalized indigenous people in Chiapas, but who have chosen the way of nonviolence. Scattered throughout the crowd were men wearing, incongruously, it seemed, Charlotte Hornet jackets. These identified them not as avid basketball fans, but rather as members of "the Bees." The designation had been chosen, Sister Esther had told us, because bees work together, because their product is sweet, and, yes, because they can be troublesome when necessary. Otherwise, most of the men wore plain white clothing, shirts and "kilts," while the women wore brightly embroidered shawls.

". . .the Easter message at its rawest, its most compelling."

The mass itself was celebrated in Spanish and in Tzotzil, the local Indian language. The service was enclosed in announcements and testimonies — this was as much a community gathering as it was a religious service — and despite the solemnity of the event, there was a sense of community and even of joy in being together. Even the rain, a messy inconvenience to us, was a sign of hope for people who had been unable to do their spring planting because of the drought.

In the shadow of the tombs, we heard the scripture lesson read from the Gospel of St. John. It was the Easter lesson, where Mary Magdalene recognizes the risen Christ when he calls her name. The young priest spoke of the resurrection as something that is promised to us. Those whose death we commemorate, he said, have risen with Christ, and they live in the people. This was the Easter message at its rawest, at its most compelling. It was what made this massacre scene different from any I have visited. Beyond the predictable grief and anger, there was hope and joy.

Early on in my visit to Mexico, I wondered how the indigenous Indian population could have adopted the faith of those who had enslaved them, and had ultimately tried to eradicate them. My first attempt at answering that question came as I watched the drama of the mass unfold. It struck me that the resurrection reality transcends human attempts to limit it or to deform it. The oppressors had brought the message of the resurrection even though they themselves, apparently, did not understand it, and had unwittingly worked to destroy it. The power of the resurrection message is that it is true. Death is never the last word; beyond the grave is life. Nothing can destroy that hope, that truth.

SOUTHERN MEXICO BISHOP Samuel Ruiz ***accepts a Global Ministries Award of Affirmation for his prophetic ministry from Patricia Tucker Spier, President, Disciples Division of Overseas Ministries. Watching are Latin America executive David Vargas (rear) and Dale Bishop, UCBWM Acting General Secretary. An advocate for indigenous rights, the Bishop is known for his role as mediator between the largely indigenous Zapatista National Liberation Army and the Mexican government. The UCC Illinois and Wisconsin Conferences maintain partner church relationships with Ruiz' Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, and often send delegations to Chiapas, one of the poorest states in Mexico.***

Ecumenism in China

In September, a woman pastor from Beijing will make religious history when she begins teaching a course in ecumenical studies at China's leading Protestant theological school, Nanjing Theological Seminary.

Ying Gao, who left the pastorate of Beijing's largest church last year to serve a year as an "ecumenical enabler" with the World Council of Churches, said Chinese Protestants have had little experience of ecumenism. "Catholics and Protestants are seen as following two different religions, rather than as two different denominations," she said. Those from different denominations, cultures and countries can still "work toward the same vision. This is what (Chinese Christians) lack. However there is now, in China, some interest in renewing denominational links with other churches outside the country.

Sharing life, hope (recent OGHS grants)

One Great Hour of Sharing continues to minister in emergencies around the globe. Through your gifts to this offering, immediate response and support for long-term rehabilitation is present in every major disaster occurring in the world. Directed gifts make their mark as well. Information on some recent emergencies follows. For more, contact Linda Petrucelli, executive for the Global Sharing of Resources, at 212/870-2283, fax 212/932-1236 or email <petrucel@ucc.org).

•**Partners hit by tornadoes.** Tornadoes and floods have damaged two of our partner educational institutions in Paraguay and Congo, respectively. Colegio Internacional in Asunsion, Paraguay, was badly hit on March 22. Three of the main buildings were stripped of their roofs. Fortunately, only one person was slightly hurt. OGHS sent $7,500 to help rebuild. In Congo a high school for women, the Nsang'ea Ndotsi School, suffered flood damage to teachers' houses, necessitating evacuation for repairs. Additionally, while Kabila forces and Rwandese refugees descended upon the area, stoves were stolen from the school and basketball courts damaged. $3,500 in OGHS support was given for this cause.

•**U.S. tornadoes and storms.** Tornadoes struck in the U.S. and the UCBWM has been there to help in Minnesota and Florida. $5,000 went to the UCC Minnesota Conference. In Florida, $3,000 for the Conference helped pastors in tornado-affected locations get counseling training to better meet the needs of survivors. Northern California/Nevada Conference Minister Mary Susan Gast was concerned about poor communities devastated by mudslides in that area due to El Nino-produced rains. $5,000 was sent to that Conference.

Wisconsin Conference Minister Frederick Trost requested additional assistance for farmers who are still having great difficulty as a result of last year's flooding. The UCBWM sent $20,000 in directed gifts in response to this request.

The big story at this writing is the tornadoes and other storms which continue to spring up all over the country, probably caused by El Nino. The UCBWM has disbursed $5,000 to Church World Service for its appeal for 1998 Spring Storms and Floods, and another $10,000, also from OGHS, to the Illinois South Conference UCC where many small towns — unremembered by the press even in Illinois — are dealing with tornado destruction. Persons wishing to help may make gifts payable to their Conference, designate them "1998 Spring Storms & Floods," and mail them to the Conference with a note requesting they be sent as soon as possible to the Office for the Global Sharing of Resources, UCBWM, 475 Riverside Dr., 16th Floor, New York, NY 10115.

•**Afghanistan earthquake.** In support of the Church World Service/Action by Churches Together (CWS/ACT) appeal for $235,000 for this disaster, the UCBWM sent $5,000 in OGHS funds. The Feb. 4 quake that devastated the Rustaq district in Afghanistan's Takhar Province killed at least 2,323 and injured 818 people. Nearly 8,110 homes were destroyed, and more than 3,000 head of livestock lost. Because many of the men in the area were in mosques at the time, many victims were women who died when their homes of mud walls, flat timber and mud roofs collapsed. Two dozen villages with a total population of 32,000 were affected in an area of immense poverty with virtually no infrastructure.

Making disaster response unusually difficult are the country's poverty, the harsh natural environment, poor infrastructure and a nearly feudal economic system.

Most of those affected were sharecroppers/farmers, among the most powerless in society; the situation is even more dire for women. Compounding this are the effects of the ongoing civil war. Road conditions and security are extremely difficult to negotiate. Through ACT International, Church World Service and Norwegian Church Aid are appealing for support to provide seeds, fertilizer and agricultural tools for 1,800 vulnerable families in some of the poorest regions during the next six months.

•**India cyclone.** CWS is in support of the ACT appeal for $458,796 for the cyclones which killed at least 200 and seriously injured 1,000 more in the Indian states of Orissa and West Bengal March 24. Another severe cyclone hit the area March 29. The UCBWM sent $5,000 to CWS to help. 10,000 people in 20 villages were left homeless. The storms caused extensive damage to standing crops, killed thousands of cattle, polluted/damaged drinking water sources, destroyed school buildings and crippled the public transport road system.

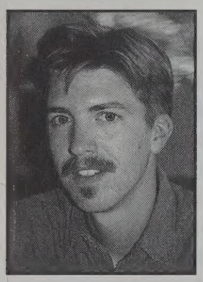
Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), a UCBWM partner, initiated immediate relief operations, providing emergency food, non-food and other relief assistance from nearby contingency stocks. CASA and Lutheran World Service have requested ACT funding and support. The ACT appeal, which CWS is supporting, seeks to provide short-term emergency relief as well as reconstruction of water sources and homes for some 4,750 vulnerable families. CASA will target its aid to 4,000 families who have lost most of their belongings, some of whom are now living in camps. CASA also proposes to cover 1,500 families from Baleswar and 2,500 families from affected villages in Danton, Egra and Mohanpur. All will receive one standard relief package which includes clothing, kitchen utensils and food. In addition, CASA plans to distribute tents to 1,200 of those families who lost their homes.

Cardinal makes history in Ecuador

Cardinal Bernardino Echeverria made church history in Ecuador in January by preaching in the country's main Anglican church in the capital, Quito. In his homily, given in January at a service to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, he praised ecumenism and emphasized the need for all Christians to work for unity.

"It is the first time I have participated in worship in a non-Catholic church, and I have realized how much we have in common," Cardinal Echeverria said. He noted the Second Vatican Council's stress on the importance of ecumenism and how the Pope has called for Christians to pray for church unity.

How We See It From Here



The April 27 assassination of Guatemalan Bishop Juan Gerardi was followed by the May 6 assassination of Luis Yat Zapeta, mayor of Santa Cruz del Quiche, of the Province of El Quiche. Through Global Ministries' missionary ***Garry Sparks****, a coalition of Mayan and popular organizations (including Christian Action of Guatemala, with which Garry serves) sent a message to the people of the U.S. calling for help in speaking out against such cowardly acts they say could endanger the peace process. The communique described Yat Zapeta as "a man with the support and future of the people."*

Gerardi was the third bishop of the diocese of El Quiche, and it was within his parishes that most of the 440 razed villages were located in the late 70's scorched-earth campaign. By 1980 the violence was so bad Gerardi made the controversial call to close the diocese, hoping to draw international attention to the atrocities. Ironically, Gerardi's assassination came 16 months after the peace accords were signed, and three days after he presented the "Project to Recover the Historic Memory" findings (known by its Spanish acronym REHMI and titled "Guatemala: Never Again"). Some remarks from Gerardi's speech follow.

". . .a soft scattering of the seeds of life and dignity. . . ."

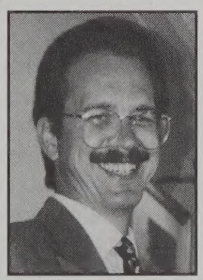
As a church, we do not have any doubt that (the REHMI work) has been part of a story of grace and salvation, a real step toward peace as a result of justice. It has been a soft scattering of the seeds of life and dignity throughout the country, and the advocates and participants in the work have been the suffering people themselves.

To open ourselves to the truth and to bring ourselves face to face with our personal and collective reality is not an option that can be accepted or rejected. It is an undeniable requirement of all people and all societies that seek to humanize themselves and to be free. It makes us face our most radical condition as humans.

Years of terror and death have displaced and reduced the majority of Guatemala to fear and silence. Truth is the primary word, the serious and mature action that makes it possible for us to break this cycle of death and violence, and to open ourselves to a future of hope and light for all.

"Truth. . .makes it possible for us to break this cycle of death and violence."

REHMI's work has been an astonishing endeavor of discovery, exploration and appropriation of our personal and collective history. It has been an open door for people to be able to breathe and speak in freedom and for the creation of communities with hope. Peace is possible — a peace that is born from the truth that comes from each one of us. It is a painful truth, full of memories of the deep and bloody wounds of the country. It is a liberating and humanizing truth that makes it possible for all to come to terms with themselves and their life stories. It is a truth that challenges each one of us to recognize our individual and collective responsibility and commit ourselves to action so that these abominable acts never happen again.



Dale Rominger, *an Associate serving in England, expressed hope for the peace process in Ireland in a letter written shortly after a pending peace agreement was announced on Good Friday. The question was to be resolved in a referendum May 22.*

The choice of the (Good Friday) deadline itself was no surprise. The tragedy of Northern Ireland is a tapestry of historical, political, and certainly religious factors. Even as Ireland is seen and sees itself as a deeply religious community, conflicts in Christian identity have always been a part of the terror. The problems in Northern Ireland are not interfaith. They are Christian.

". . .realism. . .and resurrection hope . . .balanced on edge in my heart."

The announcement finally came at 5:30 p.m. April 10. As I watched I began to hope for peace despite an almost natural and well-earned skepticism. It was as if realism, born out of so many bloody moments, and resurrection hope, born out of belief in divine/human possibilities, were balanced on edge in my heart.

The appointment of Dr. Mo Mowlam as the British government's Northern Ireland Secretary proved inspired. While at first she was unfairly criticized for her style, her naivete, her womanness, in time she became respected by most. From the moment she arrived on Irish soil she refused to play the male game so ingrained and successful for years. She demonstrated courage, spirit, intelligence and good humor. She actually formed relationships with people on both sides of the divide. She took risks and refused to do battle when battling was always expected.

". . .their voice will be missed."

The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition brought the interests of the women's peace movement to political leaders. Women's groups have challenged the male status quo as well as the men of violence. It is unfortunate, if not unjust, that the details of the agreement mean that the Women's Coalition will not win seats in the new councils. Their participation has been vitally important; their voice will be missed. Church leaders both Catholic and Protestant continually spoke and worked for peace, even though the Christian faith is so often part of the problem. With Christians killing Christians on both sides, there is nobody else to blame or challenge.

Nobody is being naive about the peace that may be beginning. There is both celebration and caution in the air. Peace has always been a threat to some. The question in Northern Ireland is whether or not it is a threat to most.

MAI — What is it? Why should it matter to you?

By C. Alicia Nebot, Associate
Global Education and Advocacy

For the first three months of this year, all we heard from the pundits is that the economy is good. The Dow Jones rose to unexpected highs. Wall Street investors are smiling, and the people's mood is optimistic. In the meantime, people in Asian countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea are suffering the effects of a devastating economic catastrophe. The pundits' explanation for the crisis is that the Asian markets haven't been free enough.

The fewer international barriers there are to the movement of resources, money and products, the greater the power and influence of large corporations and investors is in the global economy. In the last two decades regional trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have gone a long way toward deregulating trade.

". . .behind closed doors since 1995."

There are no similar agreements for investments. This is the reason why multinational corporations and the 29 most developed countries — all members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) — have been negotiating a Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) behind closed doors since 1995.

The MAI is designed to multiply the power of corporations over governments, and eliminate policies that could restrict the movement of factories and money worldwide. It places corporate profits above all other values. It would limit governments' rights and abilities to regulate foreign investors and corporations.

Furthermore, the MAI locks in place many of the economic policies that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have imposed on over 90 countries during the past 15 years. (See the companion article on Indonesia in this feature as a case in point).

". . .could not require a foreign corporation to hire local people. . ."

In a local community, this would mean that the local government could not require a foreign corporation to hire local people, use recycled materials, use parts made locally, or enter into joint ventures as a condition of operating in the community. If, for example, your community wanted to give a low-interest loan to a local company, it would have to offer the same low-interest loan to a foreign corporation.

The MAI clashes with the move toward a sustainable future which, as believed by many, should be built on small-scale enterprises and the local control of resources. Because of these threats, a coalition of 565 non-governmental organizations (comprised of labor unions, churches and women's groups) organized a worldwide campaign of disclosure and opposition to MAI. They issued a joint statement containing specific recommendations for the OECD's MAI negotiations. The World Council of Churches sent a mailing to all heads of communion members with a background paper on MAI. The letter encouraged them to "become informed about the issue and find out the position of your government, trade unions in your country." The opposition of civil society was so effective that the negotiations ran into unexpected difficulties because of disagreements between OECD members — among them the European Union. At the April 27-28, 1998, OECD meeting in Paris, the decision was made to suspend the MAI discussion for six months in order to provide more time for work to be done concerning the controversial issues named before.

". . .negotiations will continue underground. . ."

Nevertheless, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) believe that negotiations will continue underground, during which time advancements will be made toward the completion of the MAI without input from the public. NGOs also believe that global investment rules are needed — but not those written by the largest multinational corporations. We need global investment rules which are balanced, and which protect the interests of people, communities and the environment, not just special interests.

It is important to use this time to speak out on the provisions of the MAI that are unacceptable. Public awareness to issues such as these is imperative given the effects the MAI could have on people around the world.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Contact your elected officials! Let them know your concerns, ask what they know about MAI (how it will affect your community), and what they are planning to do about it.

Email contacts for additional information: Alliance for Democracy, David Lewitt, <dlewit@igc.org>; Friends of the Earth, Andrea Durbin, <adurbin@foe.org>; 50 Years is Enough, Lisa McGowan, <wb50yrs@igc.org>.

Resource contacts: The Multilateral Agreement on Investment and the Threat to American Freedom, $9.95, 800/316-APEX; In Focus, Vol. 2, No. 39, produced by Interhemispheric Resource Center and Institute for Policy Studies, 505/842-8288, <resourcectr@igc.apc.org>.

The MAI — Its effect on Indonesia

By Betty Tankersley
Southern Asia Program Associate

How much things can change in such a short time! It was less than a year ago that Indonesia was being lauded for its economic growth and rapid development. Foreign capital was pouring into that country of 200 million people as though there were no possibility of its financial world collapsing. In Jakarta,

banks — foreign and domestic — were more abundant than mushrooms after a rain, with more opening. President Suharto had moved into the circle of "important world leaders." Certainly, among his Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) colleagues, he was seen as a model leader. The exchange rate then was 2,500 rupiahs per one U.S. dollar.

". . .value of rupiah dropped by about 70%."

Since July 1997, the value of the rupiah has dropped by about 70%. And of course in the inevitable wake of such a drastic devaluation of a nation's currency come rising inflation, unemployment as businesses fail, hunger and homelessness following unemployment and rising market prices, and the spread of disease and crime resulting from hunger and homelessness. Environmental protection is out the window, leaving Indonesia's rain forests, mangrove swamps and mineral-rich land vulnerable to the whims of multinational corporations.

In a period of just six months, Indonesia's entire economy has come to the brink of collapse. In fact, some Indonesian economists say it is collapsing. Foreign investors have fled, making the situation all the more precarious. Most businesses — including all those banks — are facing bankruptcy.

As in the case of other failed Asian economies, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) devised a rescue strategy to help solve Indonesia's financial crisis. The IMF put together a $43 billion "bail-out package" which included an IMF demand that Indonesia undergo stringent economic structural reforms, such as abolishing key monopolies (most of which are held by the President's family members and special friends), and monetary discipline. At first President Suharto agreed to the plan and even signed the agreement, but balked at implementation — saying it forced Indonesia to hand over control of its affairs to outside interests.

The terms and restrictions of the IMF loan favor multinational corporations and outside investors. That is why corporate America, egged on by Wall Street, is lobbying Congress to

". . .IMF is more the problem than the solution."

approve $18 billion in new funding for the IMF. Never mind that one of the long-term implications of an IMF loan is the deepening of Indonesia's foreign debt. In fact, some senior members of the U.S. House of Representatives oppose more funding for the IMF because they say the IMF is more the problem than the solution. Indonesia's total foreign debt is now $140 billion. The private sector portion of that is $74 billion. There are conflicting reports about its total reserves, but $60 billion is the highest reported. Unless the existing debt is forgiven, it is easy to understand that another $43 billion loan can only make the situation worse.

Other rapidly developing consequences of the economic crisis are being felt at the very core of this Indonesian nation. Workers have suddenly seen their buying power cut by about two thirds. Many have lost their jobs, and even more have lost their life savings as banks have declared insolvency. The price of rice, cooking oil and other staples has doubled and tripled, prompting panic buying and hoarding, driving prices even higher, and creating food shortages.

According to *The New York Times* April 3, 1998, issue, even chicken and eggs are disappearing from the Indonesian diet. Drought conditions have necessitated importing feed for the chickens. That, coupled with the economic crisis, has driven the cost of feed up to more than double. As a result, about 90% of the poultry farmers have gone out of business. The U.S. Department of Agriculture predicted that soon Indonesia would run out of chickens entirely.

Students and ordinary citizens are protesting — even defying — the military brutality which threatens to arrest, torture and imprison them. In an unusual concession, initially students were allowed to stage peaceful protest demonstrations on campus. But now even those seem too threatening, and have been banned.

". . .could not afford to buy milk. . ."

A recent Internet report told how members of a group of Indonesian mothers called Suara Ibu Peduli ("The Voice of Concerned Mothers") are in trouble for expressing their concern about the welfare of children. In an effort to help families who could not afford to buy milk for children who are no longer breast feeding, as well as pregnant women, the group began to sell cheap milk throughout Jakarta and surrounding areas. In its monthly newsletter the group said what at first was a domestic problem for mothers had now become a public issue. They further called for mothers to unite and voice their concerns to help bring about constructive change before it is too late.

In response, Indonesian authorities arrested members of the group, charging them with minor infractions of the law. It is a time when Indonesia needs the support and loyalty of its people, yet Suharto's government seems bound to tactics which do just the opposite.

Indonesia is caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place. An IMF loan could ease the immediate economic crisis, but its foreign debt would leave the country dangerously vulnerable. And if Indonesia is forced to sign on to the MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investments), the well-being of future generations and the environment are jeopardized.

Opportunity

A travel seminar to Hong Kong and China from June 1-14, 1999, and called "Human Rights and the Role of the Church" is being organized by the Plowshares Institute.

Participants will examine results of the 1997 return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty and the impact on human rights, economic changes and Christianity within China. Unique to the seminar will be close personal contact with members and leaders of Christian churches in both places. For an application and additional information write Plowshares at P.O. Box 243, Simsbury, CT 06070, phone 860/651-4304 or fax 860/651-4305. Application deadline is April 1, 1999.

New appointments

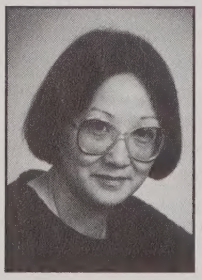
(continued from page 1)

Intern for two years with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). Specifics of her work were unknown when she left June 1 because she said the UCCP's practice is to receive their interns, get to know them and then assign responsibilities.

Jeni said her interest was sparked by a trip to the Philippines last summer when she got involved with a youth group there and decided to apply for an internship. She holds a degree in psychology with a minor in interpersonal relations, and is a member of the United Church of Christ in Wabasha, MN.

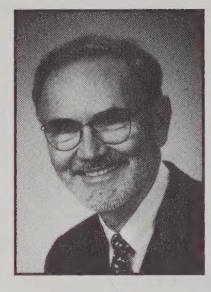
Helen Grant left May 1 to serve for two years as a Global Mission Intern with the Jerusalem office of American Near East Refugee Aid. Her work will involve collecting information and organizing data for use in writing proposals and other administrative responsibilities. She is a member of the Crestview Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN.

A student of comparative religions with a degree in religious studies and psychology, her first overseas trip was in India, followed by two years of travel while she explored life in other religious traditions. She spent last summer as a peace intern in Disciples youth camps talking about her experiences.

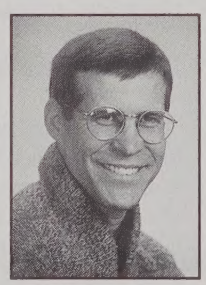


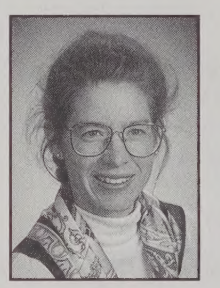
Judy Chan returned to Hong Kong June 1 for a second term with the Hong Kong Christian Council. She is responsible for staff development, public relations with non-Chinese speaking international churches, English publications and correspondence, and also coordinates the Council's youth and women's programs.

Judy coordinated the 1997 Prayer Chain prior to the transfer of sovereignty last July, in which 700 churches in 42 countries participated. She told of hearing from some women in prison who were praying for them, and of receiving letters of support and even banners — including a large one from the UCC church in Big Timber, MT. A Springfield, ME, church even sent cookies.



Carol and Larry Gilley returned to Africa to an assignment in South Africa, to assist in the design and implementation of residential and continuing education events at the Kuruman Center in Kuruman. They have spent much of their missionary careers in Swaziland, South Africa and, most recently, Mozambique.

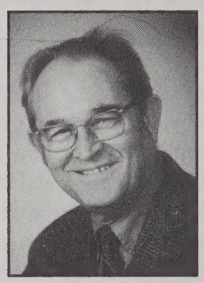




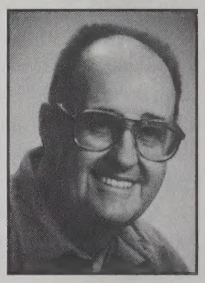
Ana and Tod Gobledale will return for an additional three years as co-pastors and developers of a congregation in Plumtree, Zimbabwe, in September. They are responsible for 26 congregations in that area. The Gobledales served in South Africa from 1983-91.

George and Joyce Wiley return to Asuncion, Paraguay, for an additional 17 months. George, volunteering after 40 years of service, is an internal auditor with Friendship Mission. Joyce will continue her administrative/educational work related to a Disciples' preschool program.

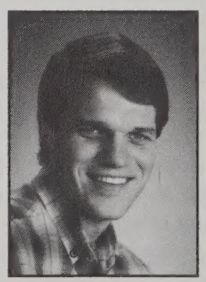
Casilda Luzares is returning for three more years as an English professor at Doshisha University with the United Church of Christ in Japan's Kyoto Conference, where she has served since 1989.



Peter Savage will continue as clinical director of the Christian Center for Family Counseling in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, for three more years. His new term begins July 1.



Frank and Kathy Glenn were reappointed for two more years as volunteers at Silliman University, Dumaguete City, the Philippines. Frank teaches education, philosophy and religion at Silliman Divinity School and Kathy teaches social work and helps in the development of social work programs.



Andy and Ellen Collins will serve three more years with the United Mission to Nepal when they return Sept. 1. Andy is an audio-visual consultant and Ellen is responsible for primary health care training as well as developing training skills and materials with the Rural Development Center in Pokhara.

Journal of Hope: Images of Cuba

By the Council of Theological Students

In March the Council of Theological Students journeyed to Cuba to continue their mission of "intentionally witnessing," so that they might understand the Cuban reality enough to speak for economic justice in light of the U.S. embargo against Cuba.

THE COUNCIL OF THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS gathered in a courtyard at Matanzas Seminary, on their mission of witnessing to the Cuban reality.

Julie Richardson, Lexington Theological Seminary — I found myself experiencing the proverbial "full range of emotions." I cried out in frustration at an old woman begging me for aspirin. . .at a little girl barely old enough to walk who already knew that her beautiful dimples earned her father American dollars when she grinned for the tourists. . .at the electricity and water going off at any point during the day. . .at the painstaking care that was put into my meals every day by people who have little to share. I cried out because it is my government that is causing all of these things to happen — our government keeps medicine and food from innocent women and children because we don't like Castro's policies. At times I was so angry at the American government's blockade I didn't even want to claim my American identity.

Jessica Vasquez, Christian Theological Seminary — We spent our time here being loved unconditionally by a people who have no reason in the world to love us; in fact, they have every reason to hate us. And yet love us they did. We come to the table of the Lord each Sunday completely undeserving of the love and grace that awaits us — yet we come having to make no excuses, with all our ugliness, and we find there a grace that sets us free to live as the Body of Christ united.

Dee Lundrey, United Theological Seminary — Here is a people struggling for basic necessities, yet with more hope and gratitude than the majority of people I know in the States. The Cuban people's hospitality, their desire for closer ties with U.S. people, and their acceptance of the differences between us is inspiring. We can learn so much about the love of God from these people. We are often removed from God. The Cuban people live in much clearer connection. I pray that the U.S. opens its ears and its hearts to the struggles of Cuba.

Stephanie Lanza, Vanderbilt Divinity School — As the week progressed the group became more and more confused about what the "truth" was in terms of the Cuban people, socialism, Fidel Castro, the politics between the U.S. and Cuba, and the economic situation. There was a real concern within the group that we bring back a true understanding of what was happening there, not what we thought was happening based on our context. We can not understand socialist philosophy of governmental policy without living with socialism's benefits and struggling with its inadequacies. Therefore, how can we presume to speak for the Cuban people? A Matanzas Seminary student wanted Americans to understand that "The economic system of Cuba is only the Cuban's business. The name of Cuba's president is only the business of the Cubans. The name of the country is only the business of the Cubans. The only thing we ask of visitors to this country is that when they leave here they speak out and tell what they have seen, both the tragic and the comic."

Diana Benjamin, Bangor Theological Seminary — One of the things that really struck me was the graciousness of the Cuban people. I don't know what I expected for sure. Maybe more anger toward Americans for the struggles they now face. That is not what I witnessed. I witnessed beautiful, strong, spiritual people who shared what little they had, asking only in return that we share their difficulties with the American people and ask them to notify their representatives and request the blockade be lifted on medicine and food. One very emotional thing for me was a young mother who asked for a bar of soap. She was not asking for food or money, just a bar of soap to keep herself and her children clean and free of disease. I think I'd be pretty angry if I could not supply my children and grandchildren with what they needed to prevent or control illness or death because people from a "Great Nation" were withholding life-saving medicine in the name of a 30-year "cold war."

Carlos Negron Sanchez, Seminario Evangelico de Puerto Rico — I have been on an emotional swing since we arrived. I find myself in deep sadness to see how my Cuban brothers and sisters are living in this historical moment. After two days here I feel new definitions of hope. Participating in Cuban Christian congregations has been uplifting and has let me see in every corner and in every Cuban face the living image of God.

Also participating in the trip were Anne Cormier, Lancaster Theological Seminary; Patricia Nicholas, Yale Divinity School; Delores Johnson, Chicago Theological Seminary; Tawnee Walling, Union Theological Seminary; and Terry Provance, executive for the World Ministries in the U.S. and Canada Program, who coordinates the CTS program.

Rominger named to high position

A Global Ministries Associate missionary, Roberta Sears Rominger, has been named a Provincial Moderator (one of 12, equivalent to a UCC Conference Minister) in the United Reformed Church's (URC) North Thames Province in England. She is the first American ever to serve in such a position.

Roberta Sears Rominger

Europe Office executive Kenneth Ziebell called the news "truly spectacular — more remarkable than it would be for a foreigner to be elected a Conference Minister in the UCC." Ziebell also noted it was significant because Rominger had to be nominated by others instead of submitting her own candidacy, a sign of the "high regard" in which she is held there.

In her new post Rominger will lead 10,600 members of 160 congregations. The province is located in London, north of the Thames River, and includes suburban areas and extends 50 miles beyond the city limits to include a number of rural communities. The seven-year appointment begins Sept. 1.

Board

(continued from page 1)

continuity during a time of transition as the UCC is restructured.

Barbara Kershner Daniel shared information on the search process for Executive Minister positions in the UCC restructure, and Board members discussed the qualities they saw as necessary for the Executive Minister of Wider Church Ministries.

It was announced that the New York UCBWM offices of the treasury, human resources and information systems will be moved to Cleveland in the year 2000 as part of the UCC restructuring.

Missionary concerned for children

Phyllis Byrd, approved for another three years of service in Africa, voiced concern about the many children in northern Uganda being abducted and used for war. Phyllis is a theological educator serving with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, based in Nairobi, Kenya.

"The most endangered species in Africa today is not the land or the animals, but children between the ages of 13 and 16. As I travel around, I see children with guns, AK-47's, being trained to fight a war they know nothing about."

She explained how, in northern Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA, a Ugandan rebel group supported in part by the neighboring northern Sudan government) has been documented kidnapping children and using them to fight the Sudan People's Liberation Army with the aim of destabilizing the southern part of Sudan. Children are being taken from their schools, she reported — the boys conscripted to fight, and the girls given as "rewards" to male combatants.

She told how visitors to the area see only the thriving part of Uganda and not the northern region where the fighting is going on. Organizations like the All Africa Conference of Churches are working with African churches to help children traumatized by war. And other church groups are working with psychological assessment, and with orphanages. But the church in general, she said, must speak loudly and strongly about this injustice against children, "the least of these."

Phyllis also told a 1994 story about a Rwandan refugee, a girl whose baby was due any time and who had hitched a ride with the driver of her vehicle. The girl told how she was too tired to do her chores and how her husband had not come home at the usual time, how people were not moving about as usual, how there was panic in the neighborhood due to the Hutu-Tutsi uprising, and how a neighbor had urged her to leave after soldiers pulled out.

The girl matter-of-factly told how she refused to leave because her husband wouldn't know where she was and because their baby was due any day. Two days later, forced to leave her home in search of food, she told of discovering her husband's body near their house, how she walked and walked through "terrible sights. It became too much for me, so I fainted." When she came to, a Tutsi was caring for her. "I think he was really a Christian."

When they arrived at the girl's house, Phyllis and companions found about 50 orphans staying there. The girl thanked them all "for allowing me to tell my story."

News of missionaries

Europe: Associate Amy Gopp, a peace consultant initially based in Zagreb, Croatia, has moved to Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, where she is serving as staff of the Face to Face Interfaith Dialogue Center. She will be based there until August 1999.

Latin America/Caribbean: George Wiley has been named an Honorary Citizen by the Paraguayan National Congress. The honor was given in recognition of his four decades of missionary work in Paraguay. Wiley and his wife Joyce are currently on home assignment. She has been coordinating the Disciples' pre-school education program and George serves as an internal auditor for Friendship Mission's board of directors.

Middle East: *Public Islam in Turkey*, a book co-authored by Ken Frank, missionary in Turkey, and his friend and Christian-Muslim dialogue partner in Turkey Adil Ozdemir, has been accepted for publication by MacMillan Publishers in the U.S., to be printed by St. Martin's Press and published in Turkey by the Redhouse Press. During home assignment Ken has been teaching at the Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA. He and his wife Betty and two children will return to Turkey in June, where Ken will resume teaching math and Betty her duties as a librarian, both with the American Collegiate Institute in Izmir.

Chronicle

HOME ASSIGNMENTS

Elena Huegel, Chile, three months beginning Jan. 1, 1999. (All dates following are starting dates.)

Mary Anna Kidd, Thailand, two months, May 31, 1998.

Thomas Kidder, India, six months, July 1, 1998.

Veronica and William Kyle, six months, Jan. 1, 1999.

Kristen Lee, South Africa, six months, Jan. 1, 1999.

Lillian Moir, Namibia, six months, Jan. 1, 1999.

Barbara Mueller, East Asia regional, six months, Jan. 1, 1999.

LOSS TO THE FAMILY

Peggy Olson, who with her husband Karl served as an Associate while they pastored the United Reformed Church of Chatham, County Kent, England, died Feb. 27 after a brief illness. She is survived by her husband.

GIFTS IN MEMORY OF

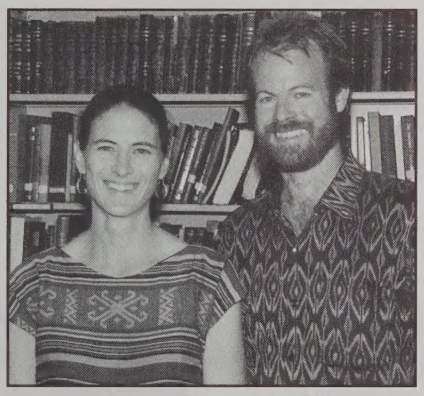
Bishop Ambalavanar
Chester L. Wagstaff
Martha Artopoeus
Judith A. Buel
Richard Good
Ruth Hofsteter
Judith Shearer
Stephanie Cook
First Congregational Church
Hattie D. Cribbs
United Church of Christ
Curtis Meyers
Dorothy Lester
Peggy Olson
Karl Olson
George Webler
Frank Stone
Agnes Wood
Allen Myrick
Alice Renaud

CWS Hotline: Call **1-800/456-1310** for a recorded message about Church World Service disaster response activities.

NEW RESOURCES: Indonesia, refugees and migrants, missionary videos

From Friendship Press. . .

Indonesia in Shadow and Light, by John Campbell-Nelson, is the new Friendship Press country resource for 1998-99. The book introduces North Americans to an island country of many ancient and complex cultures caught up in a headlong dash into the modern world economy. A sweeping survey chapter presents Indonesia's history, changing economic systems and imported religions, including Christianity.



KAREN, JOHN Campbell-Nelson

An accompanying leader's guide is written by John's spouse Karen. The Campbell-Nelsons are former UCBWM missionaries to Indonesia. Both resources include a number of case studies examining Indonesian issues, including the conflict over self-determination in East Timor. Readers are encouraged to analyze each case, look for parallels between Indonesia's problems and those of their own country, and reflect on ways to change their own actions.

The main study book is illustrated with photographs and drawings of Indonesian fabric and carving, and the guide includes Indonesian songs, proverbs and recipes. Accompanying resources are Map & Facts: Indonesia, which includes the history of Christianity in the world's fourth-largest nation, and a 28-minute video, *Indonesia: Rushing Into Tomorrow.*

Also part of the 1998-99 study is *Uprooted! Refugees and Forced Migrants,* a compelling expose of the unfathomable reality of the 50 million people who roam the world without homes, communities or countries. This study, by Elizabeth C. Ferris, helps untangle the complex causes that tyrannize and ostracize large groups of people whose common thread is that they leave their homes in fear. The book also includes information about the millions of homeless within the U.S. and Canada borders.

Through five sessions of stories and role-playing, a 32-page leader's guide helps participants wrestle with the fact that many people with once-stable lives now live with the reality of homelessness. Readers are challenged to draw connections between the material in the book and their own lives. A colorful wall map and two videos, *Make a Little Difference,* and *No Place to Call Home,* help broaden understanding. To place an order call United Church Press, 1-800/537-3394.

From the Office of Communication. . .

The UCC Office of Communication's new weekly video series, "UCC One Live," includes interviews with Global Ministries missionaries. The 30-minute tapes, which present personal insights into the people's lives, ministries and experiences, are available for $19.95 plus $3.50 shipping/handling. All the tapes come with a study guide, scriptural background, suggested discussion questions and an exercise.

Missionary tapings to date include Betty and Martin Bailey, Jerusalem; Carol and Lawrence Gilley, Mozambique; Ana Gobledale, Zimbabwe; and Phyllis Byrd, Kenya. Order from Judy Jaye, Office of Communication, 700 Prospect Ave., 8th Floor, Cleveland, OH 44115. Please include a phone contact with your order.

Visit the
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www.ucc.org
DISCIPLES Home Page
www.disciples.org

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Leaders strategize about dire Nigeria situation

About 25 church leaders met in Indianapolis in March for two days to devise specific advocacy strategies around Nigeria, one of the largest issues facing the African continent in terms of human rights and democracy. The event was sponsored by the Global Ministries Africa Office and the UCC's Commission for Racial Justice.

Participants worked on tailoring strategies for their particular communities. Suggestions included working with church mission committees; holding workshops; getting church members to events which include Nigerian speakers; putting signs on church lawns, such as "Free Nigeria," to raise interest; and tapping into Conference or Regional special interest groups.

FORMER UCBWM missionaries Dick Sales and Lou Ann Parsons (center) and the Africa Office's Pat Sanborn at the March session.

Since the 1950's, Royal/Dutch Shell has extracted oil and devastated the Ogoniland region with industrial pollution. Last year the UCC General Synod adopted a resolution (the first by a mainline U.S. church) calling for the restoration of democracy and human rights in Nigeria, an international ban on the purchase of Nigerian oil, and for the Shell Oil Co., a major exporter, to "cease despoliation of the natural environment." Some 45% of Nigeria's oil goes to the U.S and the illegal military Nigerian government depends on oil for 90% of its revenues.

Since playwright/activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogonis were tried by a secret military tribunal and hanged despite international outcry last year, hundreds of environmentalists and pro-democracy supporters have been killed, jailed and beaten. In April, six more protesters were sentenced to die, with four given life in prison.

A Nigeria advocacy page can be found on the UCC Home Page, <www.ucc.org>. Click on "Global Ministries," "Area Offices," and "Africa."

Living the vision

At the April Common Global Ministries Board meeting ***Patricia Tucker Spier,*** *Disciples Division of Overseas Ministries president, described a recent experience in Haiti.*

Reflecting on temporary structures, Spier described a scene from a trip to Haiti to visit our partner the National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti (CONASPEH), which has grown from 60 to 2,000 congregations. They are building a three-story, multi-service building which was, in fact, just shoulder-high at the time of her visit. But the U.S. visitors were surprised to find hope and faith running so high that the CONASPEH folk could see the building only in terms of three stories, even when it was referred to as a story and a half. ("No, look! We have three stories!"). "I think God has at least three stories in mind for that building, and our partners at CONASPEH already see the future," Spier said.